

Charlotte County update for 8/31/16

For one or many, county staff strives to serve

By Ray Sandrock, Charlotte County Administrator

The bar we set for county employees is to exceed expectations in the delivery of public services. The standard applies to staff staging an event for hundreds or thousands of people or steering one person to the help he or she needs.

Last week Veteran Services employee Ivey Winkler assisted a veteran seeking food assistance. The veteran had recently moved to Charlotte County and was staying in his aunt's condo. Winkler discussed his situation and determined he needed other services, too, so she helped him sign up for VA Healthcare and referred him to the VA Vet Center for PTSD counseling and to CareerSource SWFL for job placement. A few days later Winkler received a message from CareerSource that the veteran had been enrolled in Employ Florida and was hired after his first interview.

I recently received a letter from another veteran who had fallen in love with Charlotte County during a visit with an old comrade. He was so excited about what he had seen, he returned home and announced to family and friends he would be retiring here. But he needed some help identifying a parcel in the Northwest Port Charlotte neighborhood where his friends lived. I'll let this gentlemen tell you about his experience with David Vance, a design technician in our Community Development Department.

"I went to his office in the morning. I described the area I was interested in and David said, 'I'll have the map in 15 minutes and the cost is \$20.' I purchased the map and David explained ... his office was always there to answer any question I might have. He welcomed me to Charlotte County and gave me his business card. What a great experience I had with Charlotte County. I have never been treated so professionally and politely as I was when I met David Vance," the man wrote.

I'm proud of Ivey and David for setting such great examples of public service. We owe our veterans so much for their service and sacrifices. It's gratifying we could help these veterans get fresh starts here in Charlotte County.

On a related note, all Veteran Services staff have met with the Charlotte County Homeless Coalition to train on a new computer system to track veterans who come to the office. By utilizing the new system, Veteran Services staff will be better able to track outcomes and refer veterans and their dependents to necessary services. I appreciate the commitment of Human Services Director Vikki Carpenter and Veterans Services Officer Larry Brown to continuously improve their department and provide their staff the tools and training to better deliver vital services to our veterans.

Tourism post

Charlotte Harbor Visitor & Convention Bureau Marketing Director Chip Futch has been appointed to serve a one-year term on Visit Florida's Cultural, Heritage, Rural and Nature Committee. The committee is comprised of representatives from hotels, attractions and

destinations and works with the state tourism bureau to promote nature-based, cultural heritage and rural tourism. Last year, Futch served on the agency's advertising and internet committee.

The new post gives Futch an opportunity to network with his peers and improve the reach of the tourism bureau's message about Charlotte County's bountiful natural and cultural resources. You don't need to be a visitor to enjoy them, either. You can be a tourist in your hometown, support local tourism-related business during the off-season and experience for yourself why so many people flock to Charlotte County. Visit www.CharlotteHarborTravel.com to see what you may have been missing about your community.

Branding survey

The Charlotte County Economic Development Office is developing a new brand identity and marketing plan. A brief online survey has been created to solicit public input. Your answers will help the county target and recruit companies planning to relocate or expand. This 20-question survey is anonymous and take only a few moments of your time required.

To take the survey, visit floridasinnovationcoast.com/survey. The survey is open through Friday.

Project progress

Plenty of progress to report on projects funded with revenue from the voter-approved 2014 sales tax extension. Contractors are already moving dirt at the site of the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office District 1 headquarters. An official groundbreaking ceremony is set for 2 p.m., Sept. 20 at the 11501 Willmington Boulevard location.

The construction manager-at-risk bidders were ranked for the West County Annex project. Commissioners will vote on whether to begin negotiations with the top-ranked bidder at their Sept. 13 meeting. Also during that meeting the board will vote on the guaranteed maximum price set for the Veterans Memorial Park and, if approved, construction will begin this fall.

Ray Sandrock is the Charlotte County Administrator. Readers may reach him at Raymond.Sandrock@CharlotteCountyFL.gov.